

Triangle-Astérides is a center for contemporary art based in Marseilles at La Friche la Belle de Mai, a cultural cooperative located in a former tobacco factory, since 1994.

Triangle-Astérides articulates a rigorous program of exhibitions with research and experimentation residencies for artists from French and international scenes, the providing of studios and artistic and curatorial support for the local scene (associated artists and professionals and Marseilles City Studios), to which are added events, editorial projects and a thorough outreach to all audiences.

Mindful of each individual's needs, Triangle-Astérides ensures, to the best of its ability, the accessibility of all its programs for the public as well as for the invited artists (the building is accessible to all; and upon request tours can be offered in French

Sign Language and through audiodescription). Triangle-Astérides' communication elements are available in French and English (sometimes translated by professional translators, often translated into imperfect English by the team itself). Occasionally and upon request, our programs can also be translated into other languages.

Triangle-Astérides is a non-profit association supported by the Ministry of Culture – Drac Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur, the City of Marseilles, the South Region and the Bouches du Rhône Department. Its team is composed of four people (Marie de Gaulejac, curator and head of the residency and associated artists programs – Forence Gosset, administrative director – Victorine Grataloup, director and head curator – Camille Ramanana Rahary, coordinator of the residency and associated artists programs, publishing manager); its board of five people including artists (Eva Barto, Marianne Berger-Laleix, Patrice Carré, Maxime Guitton, Christian Sebille).

At Triangle-Astérides during the exhibition

Events

- Thursday, 23 February, time tbc  
Restitution of the film curation workshop by Beaux-Arts students and inmates of the Baumettes prison, in partnership with Lieux Fictifs and the Beaux-Arts de Marseille – INSEAMM
- Thursday, 16 March, 6-9 pm  
Open studios of our residents and associated artists
- Thursday, May 4, time tbc  
Performance by Ife Day (associated artist) in the framework of Printemps de l'art contemporain
- From Saturday to Monday, 6 to 8 May, opening hours tbc  
Offsite exhibition by Elias Kurdy (associated artist) supported by Beaux-Arts de Marseille – INSEAMM (bourse Printemps du Printemps) in the framework of Printemps de l'art contemporain

Public engagement

- Saturday, 18 March, 4 pm <sup>IN ENGLISH</sup>  
Guided tour of the exhibition by Bassem Saad, followed by a conversation with the artist over tea
- Friday, 7 April, 6 pm  
Guided tour by Victorine Grataloup, curator of the exhibition
- Every Saturday  
"Flash" guided tours (30 minutes) for all audiences from 6 YO at 3, 4 and 5 pm by Marine Tesseyre and Capucine Tible, educators from the team of Friche la Belle de Mai
- From Monday to Friday from 9 am to 5 pm, by appointment (write to: [mediation@lafriche.org](mailto:mediation@lafriche.org))  
Family guided tours followed by an activity; guided tours for 18 months to 3 YO; guided tours for groups (high schools, social organizations, associations...) by Marine Tesseyre and Capucine Tible, educators from the team of Friche la Belle de Mai
- Guided tours and activities by Anne Marchis Mouren for the BIM | Bureau Indépendant de Médiation culturelle

Residents, associated artists and professionnels

(meeting upon request, write to: [contact@trianglefrance.org](mailto:contact@trianglefrance.org))

10.01 – 31.03	Maïlys Moanda (FR), in partnership with Sissi	06.09.22 – 30.06	Elias Kurdy (SY/FR)
05.01 – 06.04	Angélique Aubrit & Ludovic Beillard (FR)	17.04 – 21.07	Louise Gholam (FR/LB)
06.01 – 06.04	Minne Kersten (NL)	17.04 – 21.07	Borys Medvediev (UA), in partnership with Beyond the Post-Soviet
06.01 – 06.04	Fanny Lallart (FR)	17.04 – 21.07	Mouhawalat (MA)
01.04 – 30.06	Ife Day (FR/HT)	16.01 – 15.12	Shed Publishing (FR)

Online, on BRUISE magazine

BRUISE is a digital editorial project that allows us to see, read and hear the ideas, conversations, artistic experiments and projects generated among the Triangle-Astérides' residents, associated artists and professionals as well as within its team. The editorial program, at a monthly rythm, is based on quarterly thematic cycles.

Cycle 1 Archives, storytelling and collective practices

- February: conversation with artist Karima El Karmoudi (former resident)
- March: serial screening of the documentary essay *Sol In the Dark* (2022) by artist Mawena Yehouessi, in partnership with Sissi
- April: conversation with artist Rita Hajj (former resident)

Cycle 2 Anti-Ableism and forms of solidarity

- May: text by the collective Ostensible (Lucie Camous and No Anger)

Bassem Saad

Solo exhibition

11 February — 21 May 2023

Commissioned by Triangle-Astérides

Center for Contemporary Art

# smoke in the next city

لم تكن مديحاً

NOT A EULOGY,

بداً

A THIN SMOKE

مرة أخرى

ONCE MORE

ذكرنا أن

THEY RECALLED THAT

الحل

ABOUT IS

حلول الدولة التي

THE SOLUTION

في ٣ حزيران

ON JUNE 3RD,

سقطت سوهو

SOHO FELL

عند أيدي

THE HANDS

بأهاليها

OF THE YOUNG LOOTERS

كان هناك إجماع

THERE WAS A CONSENSUS

بأن كمية البيروت

THAT A DISPROPORTIONATE

من البيروت

AMOUNT OF GAY PEOPLE

في بيروت

IN BEIRUT

سقطت فنتيجة

HAVE FOOT FETISHES

نمى النظر

WE SQUINT

بالخطر الوعيد

AT THE MENACE

بالكاد نفهم

BARELY MAKING OUT

مادته

ITS SUBSTANCE,

المضحلة

RAREFYING

Curated by Victorine Grataloup Coproduction Friche la Belle de Mai Graphic design Montasser Drissi  
Warm thanks to: Nathalie Abou-Isaac, Line Ajan, Jean-Christophe Blanc, Tarek Boukhatem, Maëva Brienne, Simon Bryckaert, Géraldine Charmadiras, Thomas Conchou, Alban Corbier-Labasse, Muriel Enjalran, Nicolas Feodoroff, Anna Frera, Elsa Gasnault, Marie de Gaulejac, John Girard, Matthieu Girard, Florence Gosset, Maxime Guitton, Vincent Hérault, Céline Jarousseau, Carin Klonowski, Stephanie Krämer, Inge Linder-Gaillard, Thibaut Magnan, Anne Marchis Mouren, Salma Mochtari, Cédric Noël, Giulia Novelli, Pierre Oudart, Camille Ramanana Rahary, Mathias Richard, David Soriano, Hélène Taam, Marine Tesseyre, Diane Turquet, Capucine Tible, Annabelle Verhaeghe, Sara Vincent



1. The phrase is repeated twice in *Congress of Idling Persons* (2021).
2. The voice of writer Sanja Grozdanić, with whom Bassem Saad collaborated on the performance *Permanent Trespass (Beirut of the Balkans & the American Century)* (2021), replaces that of the artist in the 2022 remake of *Kink Retrograde*, first made in 2019.
3. For example, the philosopher Jacques Derrida in *Glas* (1974), a book which combines a reading of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's philosophical works with the autobiographical works of Jean Genet, is quoted at the end of *Kink Retrograde* (2022) and Hortense Spillers' conference "Afropessimism and Its Others" (New School for Social Research, New York, 2021) is quoted in *Untitled n°3* (2023) of the series "Suppose that Rome is not a human habitation".
4. Quote from *Congress of Idling Persons* (2021).
5. Term used by the artist in reference to their work in an interview with the curator in Marseille in January 2023.
6. Joshua Clover, *Riot Strike Riot: The New Era of Uprisings*, Verso Books, 2019, p. 9.

Multiple modes of representation and forms of discourse coexist in Bassem Saad's work. The images overlap, reverberating and suffusing all at once. Vertical frames shot with mobile phones, the format par excellence of "rioters filming themselves" and to whom "we have barely gotten used"<sup>1</sup>, are combined with those in the landscape format of traditional film and with footage found online and repurposed.

Even more defining of the artist's practice is the interplay between the voices of different characters. We, the spectators, are party to a dense polyphony, oral as well as written. In *Congress of Idling Persons*, the artist writes in first-person and their words commingle with those of friends and fellow travelers. Elsewhere, Saad's voice is substituted by that of another writer<sup>2</sup> or transmuted into direct quotations whose sources are left undisclosed<sup>3</sup>. The effect is one that directly incarnates the experience of struggle—inherently relational and collective—in the form of the work.

Political struggle is at the heart of *Congress of Idling Persons*, which questions the accompanying affects ("vengeful joy, guarded indifference, disenchantment and mass grief"<sup>4</sup>) as well as potential belonging and solidarity, near and far, and in the unidentified "next city" of the exhibition title.

Playing themselves, writer Islam Khatib and activist Mekdes Yilma evoke the vexed positions of Palestinian refugees and of migrant domestic workers in the 2019 uprising in Lebanon. The film puts the uprising in Lebanon in dialogue with the 2011 uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, and Syria, the Chilean feminist mobilizations of 2019-2020, and the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States, where Saad lived at the time of the George Floyd protests in 2020. Tears are omnipresent, from talk of crying by DJ and translator Rayyan Abdel Khalek and musical artist Sandy Chamoun, to the objects they play with while conversing amidst the smoke and its bluish penumbra: onions and cough medicine allude to the tear-gas used against protesters, as the leftover canisters are humorously imagined as sex toys.

The use of expired French teargas by Lebanese riot police is the subject of the research mapping in *Still many hours to be spent with mixed company at the Square* (2020), Saad's second sculpture to employ an orthopedic device after *To my mother and a protester detained on November 15th* (2019). Both sculptures trace unsettling links between the body undergoing treatment or optimization and the body under attack.

In *Kink Retrograde* (2022 remake), a similarly unlikely relation is established between risk-aware consensual kink — embodied by a harness and whip yielded by Rayyan Abdel Khalek — and the non-consensual risk arising out of environmental toxicity, that which is always unevenly distributed among the inhabitants of a city.

Bassem Saad likes to speak of a "thin totality"<sup>5</sup>: Regardless of medium, the artist's methodology involves putting in relation phenomena which appear unconnected, such as sites and objects of confinement and those of leisure: the Baumettes prison in Marseille is superimposed with the Mucem (Museum of Civilizations of Europe and the Mediterranean) and the Tegel prison in Berlin with the Flughafensee lake, in the lenticular prints *Untitled n°1* (2022) and *Untitled n°3* (2023) of the series "Suppose that Rome is not a human habitation".

Saad is interested in the position of prisons at the margin and periphery, geographically but above all symbolically. The artist's work revolves around those who find themselves unaccounted for and made into surplus. "At the same time, riot is itself the experience of surplus. Surplus danger, surplus information, surplus military gear. Surplus emotion"<sup>6</sup>:

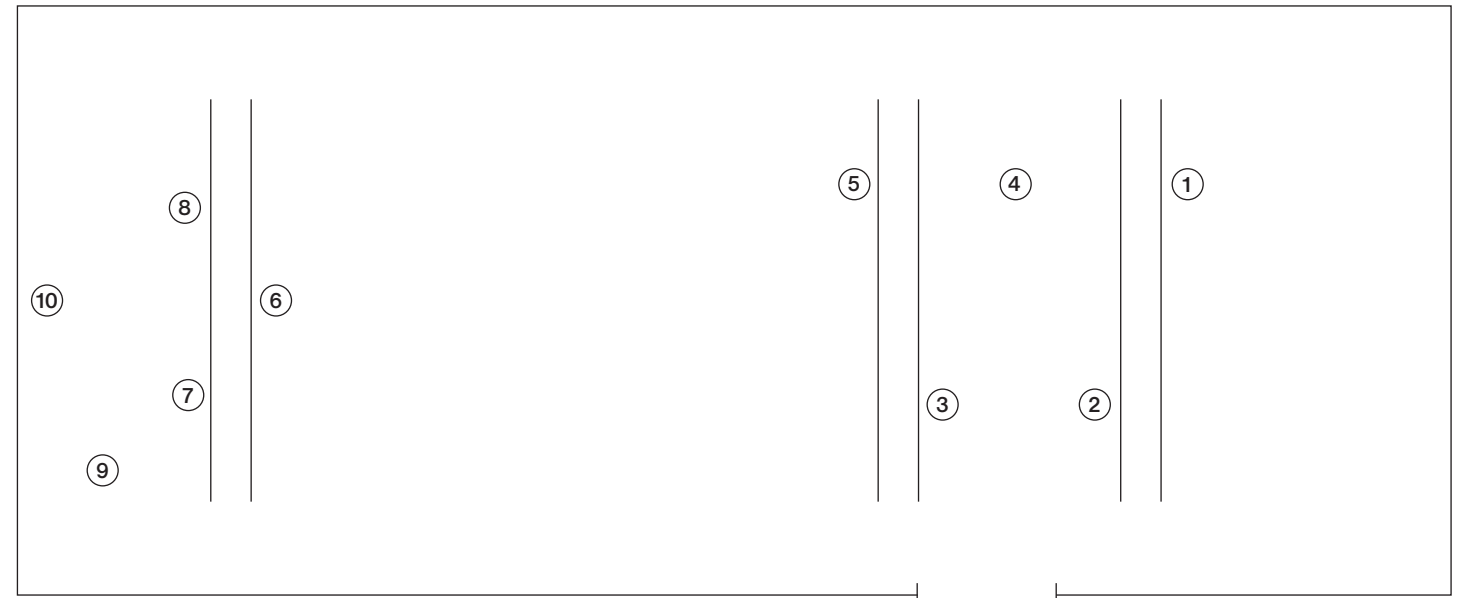
*Handmaiden or midwife?* (2023), installed on the Panorama's glass facade, bathes the exhibition space in an orange light. The multilingual site-specific installation echoes *Untitled n°3* (2023) which faces the facade, as well as the set of collages presented in the scaffolding box at the entrance, by recalling the memory of the last person to be guillotined in Europe, executed at the Baumettes prison in Marseille in 1977. The arrow diagram points in the direction of the prison, like an abolitionist compass.

By Victorine Grataloup, curator  
Translated by A.X.

## About the artist

Bassem Saad is an artist and writer born in Beirut. Their work explores historical rupture, infrastructure, spontaneity, and difference, through film, performance, and sculpture, as well as through essays and fiction. With an emphasis on past and present forms of praxis, they attempt to place scenes of inter-subjective exchange within their world-historical frames. Bassem's work has been presented and screened at MoMA,

CPH:DOX, Busan Biennale, Kunsthalle Wien, and Transmediale. Their most recent film, *Congress of Idling Persons*, received Special Mention in the New:Vision Award category at CPH:DOX 2022. Their essays and short stories appear in various online and print publications. They are currently a fellow at the Berlin Program for Artists.



1. **Saint Rise**  
HD video, 14'00", 2018  
Featuring clippings from a lawsuit filed by the municipality of Faraya in Mount Lebanon, Bassem Saad's first film focuses on the controversial erection of a statue of St. Charbel in the mountains of Faraya, in connection with the "biggest floating island in the Middle East."
2. **Provisional collages, 2023**  
A set of collages in progress which deals with some of the relationships established by the works in the exhibition: one comes across intellectual figures such as activist Houria Bouteldja, philosopher Jacques Derrida, writer Jean Genet, and philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel; the sculptures of the seven deadly sins (1938) by Antoine Sartorio which line the Baumettes prison wall; film still from *Black Girl* (1972) by director Ousmane Sembène; the guillotine and a quote by the prison abolitionist activist Jacques Lesage de la Haye.
3. **4 texts in progress: an experimental essay, "Exporting the Revolution", and 3 short fragments of "Torpide City", a longer work of fiction**  
As evidenced by the works of different mediums, writing is central to Bassem Saad's practice. The essay "Exporting the Revolution" connects three young insurrectionary figures: Mahsa Amini, Mohamed Bouazizi and Sarah Hegazi, while the fragments of "Torpide City" feature, among other things, currency inflation in Lebanon, the German Ausländerbehörde, and a fictional assembly in the Beirut park.
4. **Still many hours to be spent with mixed company at the Square**  
Sculpture, 2020  
The French companies Alsetex and SAPL produced some of the crowd control weaponry used against protesters in Lebanon in 2019-2020. Through collage, the sculpture contrasts this neo-colonial and counter-revolutionary technological exchange with notions of the cessation of optimized cognitive labor embodied by the orthopedic device.
5. **Kink Retrograde**  
HD video, 19'00", original version 2019, remake 2022  
In the original 2019 version of the film, conceived in connection with the 2015 garbage crisis in Lebanon, Saad's voiceover guided us through the twists and turns of a speculative allegory questioning environmental toxicity and the social contract. Considering that the 2019-2020 uprising sheds light on the video in retrospect, Bassem Saad has produced this remake in 2022. A new voice-over comments with a degree of remove on the initial project and its ambitions.
6. **Congress of Idling Persons**  
4K video, 36'00", 2021  
Central to the exhibition, Bassem Saad's latest film questions the transnational solidarities and emotions at the heart of uprising.
7. **Untitled n°1, from the series "Suppose that Rome is not a human habitation"**  
Lenticular, 2022  
Bassem Saad's first lenticular print depicts the Tegel prison in Berlin and the Flughafensee lake next to it, a popular swimming destination. The text that fades in and out depending on where one gazes from comments on that which is deemed surplus and made invisible among the city and its population.
8. **Untitled n°3, from the series "Suppose that Rome is not a human habitation"**  
Lenticular, 2023  
(Triangle-Astérides production)  
A similar relationship is established between the Baumettes prison and the Mucem, where objects seized from inmates have been deposited. The objects appear in the central image of the lenticular.
9. **To my mother and to a protester detained on November 15th**  
Sculpture, 2019  
Bassem Saad's first sculpture modifies a spine brace worn by both the artist's mother during chemotherapy and by a Lebanese protester after police interrogation in 2019. The work toys with the the form of a reclining chair and addresses the accepted forms of violence a body may be exposed to.
10. **Handmaiden or midwife?**  
In-situ installation, 2023  
(Triangle-Astérides production)  
Revolving around Hamida Djandoubi, the last person to be guillotined in Europe at the Baumettes prison in Marseilles in 1977, the site-specific installation proposes a formal relationship between landscape seen in transparency and a poetic text, in French, English and Arabic, as do the lenticulars that face it. The circular diagram points in the direction of the Baumettes prison.